

PROJECT	<b>Lincoln and the Spirit of Freedom Statue</b> African American Civil War Museum 1925 Vermont Avenue NW Washington, DC
SUBMITTED BY	The African American Civil War Memorial Freedom Foundation
REVIEW AUTHORITY	Recommendation to Mayor and District Council
ACTION TAKEN	Recommend Favorable Disposition

---

The Commemorative Works Committee (Committee) recommends favorable disposition of the proposed statue of President Lincoln in public space adjacent to the African American Civil War Museum (Museum) at 1925 Vermont Avenue NW. The Committee considered the commemorative work at its April 30, 2021 meeting and requested additional consideration of minor issues to be resolved through further discussion between the Sponsor and reviewing agencies:

1. Changes to the fence surrounding the commemorative work including the vertical design of its pickets to be horizontal or panels and the color of the fence so that it matches other metal fencing associated with the Museum;
2. Increasing the height of the commemorative work to exalt the figure of Lincoln by placing it on a low, granite base; and,
3. Additional consideration of ADA interface with the sculpture through interpretative panels or other means.

#### Background

The African American Civil War Memorial Freedom Foundation, a non-profit corporation with a mission to raise awareness of the United States Colored Troops who fought for the Union in the United States' Civil War, is proposing a statue of President Lincoln in public space controlled by the District Department of Transportation (DDOT). The public space is adjacent to the Museum located in the historic Archibald Grimke School at 1925 Vermont Avenue. The Museum is across the street from the African American Civil War Memorial (Memorial). The commemorative work is proposed to be placed on a podium integrated into stairs in front of the Grimke School building's north wing. The statue was also reviewed by the Public Space Committee and the Historic Preservation Office due to its location in public space and in the Greater U Street Historic District. The sidewalk and public space around the statue are designed as an extension of Memorial. The statue of Lincoln is a total height of 5' and sits upon a podium that is 3'6" above the sidewalk. The statue is made of bronze and depicts President Lincoln seated as he signs the Emancipation Proclamation.

There is a strong connection between the commemorative work, its location, and the District of Columbia. It is located near the Civil War-era contraband Camp Barker that was home to runaway slaves eventually freed by President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. President Lincoln also routinely traveled past the location of the proposed commemorative work on his way to and from the White House and the summer cottage he used at the Soldiers Home.

### Assessment of the Application

#### *Location and Relationship to the Subject Matter*

The proposed site is appropriate considering the subject, use of the adjacent building, its association to important aspects of slavery in the District of Columbia, and direct ties to President Lincoln:

- Potential sites identified as part of developing a Draft Commemorative Work Location Strategy included this location as a potential "Shared Space" for a commemorative work as a District-owned property along Vermont Avenue, which is identified in the strategy as a Primary Corridor;
- The statue, design of public space, and Museum are intended to be an extension of the Memorial that is across Vermont Avenue from the proposed site; and,
- The commemorative work's setting is incorporated into a grand staircase leading to the original, main entrance to the Grimke School, close to the sidewalk where it is visually accessible, and entirely out of the pedestrian sidewalk.

There is also a strong and direct connection between the proposed commemorative work and site specific to the District of Columbia. Slavery was legal in the District of Columbia during the Civil War until 1862 when Congress authorized the DC Compensated Emancipation Act authorizing President Lincoln to purchase the freedom of about 3,100 enslaved persons living in the District. At the time of the compensated emancipation, more than 3,500 mostly runaway slaves were living at contraband Camp Barker located in an area near the proposed commemorative work, between 11th and 13th Streets NW and from S Street south to Logan Circle. A few of the slaves living there were freed by the April 16, 1862 Act, but most were not because they did not have their owners' consent.

President Lincoln would also occasionally travel north along Vermont Avenue to reach the Soldiers Home from the White House, passing the location of the proposed statue. In late June 1862 while writing the Emancipation Proclamation, the President stopped and visited former slaves at the site of William Lloyd Garrison Elementary School, two blocks south of the commemorative work's proposed location. Several community institutions important to DC's African American history grew out of Camp Barker: Howard University Hospital (which evolved out of Camp Barker Freedman's Hospital), Metropolitan Baptist Church, Vermont Avenue Baptist Church, and the first African American residents in the area of what would become the center of African American culture in the District of Columbia along U Street.

#### *Proposed Work's Compatibility with District Policies and Values*

The proposed commemorative work is consistent with District policies and values:

- The commemorative work's location is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's policy to locate commemorative works outside of the Monumental Core and furthers the goal of the ARTS-2 zone where it is located, which is intended to promote art-related uses, encourage pedestrian activity, and strengthen the design character and identity of the area;

- President Lincoln is a person consistent with values defined in the final report of Mayor Bowser's District of Columbia Facilities and Commemorative Expressions (DCFACES) Working Group that emphasizes discouraging subjects that participated in slavery, systemic racism, mistreatment of, or actions that suppressed equality for, persons of color, women and LGBTQ communities and violation of the DC Human Rights Act; and,
- The design of public space and incorporation of the statue into the redevelopment of the Grimke School is consistent with recommendations in the Office of Planning's DUKE plan (2004) that specifically calls for distinct streetscape improvements in front of the school to visually connect it to the Memorial plaza across Vermont Avenue and to install public art in front of the school.

#### *Design of and Materials Used in the Commemorative Work*

The materials proposed for the commemorative work are durable and appropriate for the subject. The statue and base are proposed to be bronze, a material that has historically been used for outdoor sculpture because of its durability. The bronze finish will have the same patina as the Memorial statue across Vermont Avenue. The sponsor will provide a mobile application with interpretive information available directly to users through cell phone display that informs the public about locations, exhibits, and other points of interest such as the African American Civil War Memorial Plaza, Spirit of Freedom Statue, Wall of Honor and Lincoln Statue to visitors. An illustration provided by the sponsor shows the steps of the Grimke School, podium, and Lincoln Statue directly in front of the main entrance to Museum during the day.

Further consideration of minor elements of the commemorative work and its setting warrant further discussion with staff and can be resolved through the permitting process:

1. Color and Design of Step Railing – Current color and orientation of railings on monumental steps where the commemorative work is located distract from the statue and make it appear fenced in. The Committee requested the Sponsor continue working with reviewing agencies to change the color of the railing to match other railings associated with the Museum and consider a revised railing design that uses horizontal pickets or panels instead of vertical pickets;
2. Height of Statue – Location of the statue surrounded by step railings make the figure of Lincoln appear to be fenced in. The Committee requested the Sponsor consider adding another tier under the statue, like a granite slab, to better exalt the figure of Lincoln; and,
3. Interface with All Users – Steps surrounding the commemorative work make it difficult for all users to approach the statue. The Committee requested the Sponsor consider ways to increase accessibility to the statue or interpretive elements, such as locating interpretive panels at the grade of the sidewalk or in accessible areas of the Museum's lobby.

#### *Sponsor's Ability to Fund and Maintain the Commemorative Work*

The Lincoln statue was purchased with a matching grant from the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities (CAH) that was matched by the Museum through fundraising. It was fabricated and delivered to the museum in July 2020 where it is in storage awaiting installation. Construction work necessary to prepare the site for installation is being funded through a grant from DDOT. Formal installation will cost about \$12,000 and the museum has reserved funds for this task. The Management and Indemnification Agreement between the Museum as tenant and Community Three Grimke as landlord requires the Museum to make a \$25,000 deposit and agree to maintain all improvements in

public space in front of the Grimke building including the Lincoln statue. This agreement also requires the Museum to maintain insurance on items it installs.

*Summary of Reviews by Other Reviewing Agencies and Organizations*

Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) - The ANC1B provided comments to OP on March 8, 2021 and raised no concerns with the application. Its support for the commemorative work is documented in their August 1, 2019 letter to CAH. This letter states, "Since 2014, ANC1B has promoted a vision for a 'civic plaza' at U Street and Vermont Avenue. The civil plaza will engage individuals existing the metro with a view of the African American Civil War Memorial, and the historic Grimke School." ANC1B also states support for a design of public space that includes, "the use of granite pavers, plants and trees, (and) installation of iconic statue of Spirit of Freedom and President Lincoln signing the Emancipation Proclamation."

District Department of Transportation (DDOT) – The Public Space Committee (PSC) reviewed this application for DDOT at their April 22, 2021 meeting and approved the location of the statue. However, it did not approve the lighting, noting a streetlight that is part of approved streetscape plans less than 20' from the proposed location of the statue and recommending additional lights be added later if the Sponsor determines it is necessary. PSC members also raised concerns about locating non-standard lighting in public space, specifically attaching non-standard spotlights to a light pole that can damage the structural integrity of the pole and how lights projecting onto the statue from its base would contribute to light pollution.

National Capitol Memorial Advisory Commission (NCMAC) - The Chair of NCMAC has reviewed the application, noted the commemorative work is not located in a park or other public or similarly prominent space, and concluded that given its placement no further review by the Commission is necessary.

Historic Preservation Office – The Historic Preservation Office has reviewed and approved the public space application associated with this project.

*Commemorative Works Committee Recommendation*

The Commemorative Works Committee recommends favorable disposition of the proposed statue of President Lincoln in public space adjacent to the African American Civil War Museum (Museum) at 1925 Vermont Avenue NW and requests additional consideration of minor issues to be resolved through further discussion between the Sponsor and reviewing agencies.



---

**Andrew Trueblood**

Director, DC Office of Planning

Chair, DC Commemorative Works Committee